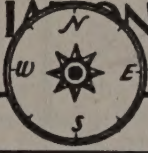


# The COMPASS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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FEBRUARY, 1938

VOLUME XIX, NUMBER 5

## *In this Issue*

### *Articles by:*

Frank J. Bruno

Alvin Guyler

Agnes McCreery

Mary Palevsky

Louis Resnick

Christine Robb Thompson



**D**ISCUSSION of inservice training in chapters and agencies can be expected to spring from the working statement "Inservice Training for Social Work" in this issue. Christine Robb Thompson is responsible for the drafting of this provocative statement.

**A**LL the facts in the "de Schweinitz case in Pennsylvania" are summarized in the second of two articles by Alvin Guyler in this issue. The first installment appeared in the January number.

**T**HE fifth article in the series "What Role Will the Social Worker Play?" brings COMPASS readers the viewpoint of Frank J. Bruno, of the George Warren Brown Department of Social Work at Washington University. Jane Hoey, director of the Bureau of Public Assistance, Social Security Board, will write the sixth and concluding article of the series for the March issue.

**L**ETTERS of reference are "devices of limited utility." This is one of the startling conclusions of a committee appointed to make a searching study of this subject. The summary of findings of this group, prepared by Mary Palevsky, is a readable document.

**F**ORTHRIGHT are Louis Resnick's opinions in regard to present and future requirements for social work interpreters. You may or may not agree.

**T**WO legal actions instituted by chapters are reported on in this issue. They will be found under the headings of Michigan and Arkansas on pages 19 and 21.

**N**EWs of two new committees, one to collect data on specifications and exam procedures for public welfare positions and the other to consider important questions of structure and functions of the Association, is included in this issue.

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## Some Points on Reference Writing

A Report of the New York City Chapter Committee on Letters of Reference.

By MARY PALEVSKY, chairman.

THE Division of Employment Practices of the New York City Chapter of the AASW has felt for some time the need of systematic discussion of reference writing as an important item of personnel practice. Accordingly, a representative committee of nine chapter members was appointed by the Division in December 1936. The Division suggested a list of questions on which it desired clarification but otherwise left the committee free to organize its own discussion.

### A. INTRODUCTION

We had eight meetings of about one and one-half hours each. It soon became evident that our subject, properly treated, should rest upon a solid foundation of previously assimilated "implications." For all practical purposes, however, these were non-existent. We therefore chose to ignore the baffling variables inherent in our subject and to limit ourselves to a discussion of a few simple, pragmatic principles which might serve as a guide, here and now, to persons who are charged with responsibility for reference writing.

A cursory survey revealed an almost complete lack of published material in this field.\* In 1936, the Case Conference of the Joint Vocational Service undertook a study of reference writing and reference evaluation. Miss Grace L. Anderson, acting for the Conference, wrote to some 30 local and national agencies including schools of social work, universities, teachers' and nurses' placement bureaus, U. S. Civil Service Commission, social agencies and others. This material was placed at our disposal. The replies to the letters sent out indicated widespread agreement upon these points:

- (1) Letters of reference are difficult to write and unsatisfactory to receive.
- (2) The subject is important and worth investigating.
- (3) The writers feel they have no considered contribution to make to the subject at the present time.
- (4) The writers eagerly await the findings of any committee which may concern itself with the subject.

As a basis for discussion, we analyzed a number of actual but unidentified evaluations and letters of reference brought in by committee members from the files of public and private agencies. For the most part, the individuals whose references were available were case workers. Material supplied by the Joint Vocational Service gave us an unexcelled opportunity to follow through the annotated careers of several workers as they moved from one job to another. For another approach to our problem, we asked a number of supervisors and executives in different fields of social work to send us samples of John Doe letters which would give the writers' conception of the kind of references they would like to receive.

### B. SOME IMPRESSIONS ABOUT REFERENCE WRITING

#### *Inherent difficulties*

Our committee was impressed by the bristling difficulties surrounding our problem. Indeed it seemed to us that only a person of rare courage and exceptional ability would willingly undertake to write a reference. Troublesome questions to which there are no satisfactory answers presented themselves. Who writes a reference? To whom does it go? How is it interpreted by the recipient? What are the requirements of the job? In the light of past or present performance, how prognosticate future development? Are there limits to growth? How is one to know for certain when those limits have been reached? And so on, ad infinitum.

Basic to the whole question is the fact that reference evaluation is inseparable from the larger and vastly more complex question of standards in social work which the professional membership as a whole is struggling to define. A recently published discussion by the

\* A book by Dr. Lloyd Morrisett called "Letters of Recommendation" was recently published as his doctor's thesis and is on sale at the Columbia University book store. The book was not included in the committee's deliberations.



AASW points out: "A special difficulty in setting up standards for social work lies in the fact that its standards are still peculiar to the special fields, and common denominators have not been widely recognized or in many instances even identified. On the whole, all social workers profess the same general interests in helping individuals to live more adequate lives and to increase their environmental and personal resources to this end. However, there is still a great deal of professional exploration to be done in such areas as those of common background and knowledge, understanding of specialized methods and techniques, and recognition of function. Other professions, including medicine, have had to go through similar phases. These wide variations between the standards of the special fields of social work mean that a question is inevitably raised about those requirements which are selected as basic to a general standard." \*

The repercussion of this state of confusion is felt with added force at the point of reference evaluation. Our discussion materials revealed conflicting and incalculable elements. (1) *A* is a superior candidate for an important civil service position. His employer writes a thoughtful analysis of his work, describing strengths and weaknesses in great detail. (2) *B*, far less able, is also a candidate for the same position. His employer writes a laudatory reference in general terms, raising no questions of limitations. The references are the deciding factor, all other things being approximately equal. *B* gets the job. (3) An agency is looking for an opportunity to rid itself of a troublesome and incompetent worker. The executive writes a glowing letter, omitting any suggestion of difficulty and concludes "Miss X will be a great asset to your organization." Miss X gets the job and does very well indeed. (4) An undefined shadow of disapproval hangs over the professional life of an otherwise well qualified social worker. Opportunities for promotion just manage to escape him. When his career is retraced, it is found that a reference written a decade earlier contains an unqualified statement that he is "aggressive."

### *Positive Aspects*

When the occasion for writing a reference is used with due regard for professional responsibility, it provides an unusual opportunity for constructive counselling to the worker and the employer. This may result

from direct contact between them or through the intermediary services of a professional school or placement bureau. At this point the committee felt we should ask ourselves: Are we reshaping our conception of the use of reference in consonance with case work concepts of today? Do we ask for a reference without consent of the person involved? Do we take him along with us in our thinking, as we do our case work clients? Is there a mutual sharing of responsibility? Do we ask, "What can you say about yourself and your ability? What would you like me to say about you and your ability?"

Among the samples of John Doe references studied by the committee, there was one which satisfied to a high degree the committee's notion of a reference which they would like to have written or to have received. In summary, this reference, written by the executive of a private family case work agency, covered the following points:

1. Full description of community needs.
2. Description of the worker's experience.
3. Description of the worker's case load.
4. Relationship to staff.
5. Use of supervisory relationship.
6. Specific techniques and methods.
7. Relationship to other agencies.
8. Abilities on different functional levels such as intake, supervisory, etc.
9. The worker's understanding of the field as a whole.
10. Her appraisal of her own development.
11. Her statement of her specific field of interest for the future.
12. The agency's opinion of the worker's needs.
13. The agency's opinion of the worker's accomplishments.

These items added together gave the committee a good picture of the worker functioning in relation to the agency and the community. It contained an unusually good job specification and an excellent matching of the worker's needs against those of the agency. The tone of the letter was objective and professional. It conveyed the feeling that the evaluation as well as the reference were arrived at jointly by the worker and the agency.

### C. SUGGESTIONS FOR REFERENCE WRITING

#### *Evaluation as Antecedent Process*

Implicit in the committee's discussion throughout, was the assumption that periodic evaluation of workers is an indispensable an-

\* "Some Points on Professional Standards" by Martha Maltman and Grace Marcus—published by AASW.



tedecedent process to any type of reference writing. We made a few desultory sallies into this formidable field and ultimately retreated, with a recommendation to the Division on Employment Practices that a concurrent committee on Evaluation be set up. For our purposes, we assumed arbitrarily that every agency employing social workers has a systematic and known method whereby evaluations are made and written at frequent, regular, and stated intervals; that the substance of the evaluation is made known to the worker; that evaluations are written by responsible persons to whom that function is formally assigned.

#### *Suggested Points to Consider*

1. A reference should be written in terms of a dynamic process of growth and development.
2. Although it is difficult to separate skills from the personality to whom they belong, emphasis in a reference should be placed on the kind of skills, rather than the kind of person.
3. A reference should be the result of unified group thinking of all the persons in an agency who have contributed to the evaluation.
4. A reference should further be based upon an evaluation arrived at jointly by worker and evaluators.
5. (a) A reference should not include mention of earlier health or personality defects in cases where these have been satisfactorily corrected.  
(b) In cases of persons suffering from current remediable health or personality defects of which they are aware and which they are taking steps to correct, the question whether these should be mentioned in a reference must be decided on an individual basis.
6. Information learned about a worker outside of his professional performance should usually not be included. If it is found necessary to use such information, it should be done with discrimination, preferably through a counseling service.
7. In general, ideologies concerning sex, religion, and politics, should not be included in a reference unless they show a clear-cut interference with professional performance. However, there are frequent instances of rural and small town situations where certain personal attitudes would make any professional contribution impossible. In such cases both employer and employee are protected against unnecessary misunderstanding if the facts on both sides are known in advance.
8. A reference writer should not make evaluations of the receiving agency's needs or standards in relation to the worker under consideration.
9. The use of a formula in reference writing should be avoided.
10. A reference should be sent only if the writer has definite assurance that his letter will go to a responsible professional person. In case of doubt as to the professional responsibility of the inquiring agency, general statements without attempts at analysis should be sent.
11. References should be treated with professional consideration as privileged documents and should be handled by a responsible staff member, personnel committee or its representative. Usually summaries of references and other personnel materials should be prepared for board members.
12. The danger should be avoided of providing references in the public agency field which may be used as political ammunition.
13. In the case of an executive, a reference may be prepared for a lay governing board, by a group of the executive's professional peers.
14. A case committee may be set up to consider references for borderline and other problem workers concerning whose professional fitness there is serious doubt. Such a procedure would be especially applicable to persons who had made a heavy investment in professional training.

#### D. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The committee is well aware of the gaps and the lapses in its thinking. It has not touched upon references for students who have had no practical experience. It has not differentiated between public and private agencies. It has not included the different fields and specialties of social work. Principles cannot be established in a vacuum. The committee therefore recommends further study by homogeneous groups along the lines suggested in this report.

*(Continued on Page 28)*



## The Current Relief Situation

### Prompt Action Necessary to Meet Mounting Unemployment and Relief Need.

THE renewed depression, mounting unemployment and increasing need for relief throws added emphasis on the necessity for immediate federal action to provide for:

1. Continuation of WPA until liquidation can be effected through employment in private industry, or the function taken over by a federal public works program on a non-relief basis.
2. Federal grants-in-aid to states for direct relief as a necessary underpinning for any work program.

These are the important things for immediate Congressional action according to the Association's Division on Government and Social Work and the program which it has been maintaining for several years to urge continued federal support of the total relief program and full cooperation with the states.

Continued confusion over the false issue of "work is better than relief" still hampers constructive action in Washington. Real work is, of course, better than any relief. Some work relief may be better than some other relief, but the present WPA policy does not substitute work for relief. It gives work to some people and then refuses to help the states with the remaining tremendous relief burden. At no time has the WPA program removed the need for relief but it has been vastly influential in breaking down the ability of the state and local government to provide relief consistently, humanely and adequately.

This confusion may be heightened by the President's message to Congress on January 3. In discussing relief, he said:

"... They think that relief for the unemployed by giving work is wasteful, and when I pin them down I discover that at heart they are actually in favor of substituting the dole in place of useful work. To that neither I nor, I am confident, the

Senators and Representatives in the Congress will ever consent."

Further on he was quoted as saying:

"... The first condition is that we continue the policy of not permitting any needy American who can and is willing to work to starve because the Federal Government does not provide the work."

This statement may lead the casual reader to assume that the present WPA program provides work relief for *all* needy employable able-bodied unemployed persons and may further lead the casual reader to assume that *all* of those who urge federal aid for direct relief urge it as a substitute for a program of work. Neither of these assumptions would be correct.

When the WPA program was first instituted, it was generally understood that the federal government would assume responsibility for *all* able-bodied employable jobless then receiving relief, leaving to the states and

local governments the responsibility of providing for those in need who were unable to work. This division of responsibility while faulty, never became a fact in actual practice.

At no time since the inauguration of the WPA program have more than three and a half million persons been employed on work projects. According to the latest WPA statistics available, *only one and a half million persons* were on WPA rolls during December. The Biggers Unemployment Census estimates that in November there were from eight to ten million adults wholly without jobs seeking work.

It is a well-known fact that many states and local

governments are in financial strait-jackets imposed by constitutional limitations, tax delinquencies and lack of resources. Others are in better shape financially but find legislators disinclined to provide funds for an ever-increasing burden of need.

#### NECESSARY IMMEDIATE ACTION

1. Increased appropriations for WPA immediately to provide work relief for as many needy able-bodied persons as can be assigned to useful work projects.
2. Immediate appropriation and allocation of federal funds to states for general assistance on a grant-in-aid basis to provide relief to those unable to work or unable to secure WPA placement because of quota restrictions.
3. Immediate provision for uniform grants to states on a 50-50 basis for all types of assistance now available under the Social Security Act.



Local direct relief, available either to families with employable or unemployable members, varies from state to state and even from county to county within states. The picture in the main is a patch work of inadequate, stop-gap, and in many instances, inept and haphazard relief devices.

The federal government's position in respect to direct relief and its dismissal of the "dole" as an indecent and unholy device has affected local thinking. Direct relief has many abusers and apparently few defenders. Little or no mention is made of the unfortunate human beings whose only hope of existence lies in some kind of direct relief, call it a dole or what you will.

Other types of aid have been made attractive to local governmental subdivisions and the federal government stands ready, if not to match dollar for dollar, at least to offer some financial inducement to a state to provide special kinds of aid or service. Aid to the blind, dependent children and the aged, under the Social Security Act, are endorsed by the federal government, as they should be, and federal funds are available to supplement local funds.

Those who are old, but not old enough;

those who are young, but not young enough; and those who are handicapped, but not handicapped enough,—find themselves without a champion—and without help. It appears they make up a lost battalion of the needy and because dole is a hateful word, they are often denied the help they sorely need. It would seem a simple thing to establish the fact that an old man or an old woman just under sixty-five years can be just as hungry as one just past sixty-five and just as cold in an unheated tenement. Certainly children just over sixteen need clothes and food as much as those just under sixteen.

Pointless debates on the blessedness of work will not bring the needed aid to the members of this lost battalion. Fruitless discussions of the morale building effects of work will not provide fuel for the unheated tenements or milk for the hungry children.

Let us have work, real work at going rates—for as many of those who can work as can be fitted into a work program—and for those who cannot work or cannot be cared for through a work program for whatever reasons,

let us have some form of decent, humane direct assistance. Not *one* or the *other* but BOTH.

#### NECESSARY SECONDARY ACTION

1. Planning whereby the present WPA program can be liquidated and replaced by a real federal public works program, divorced from relief, offering genuine jobs at going wage rates.
2. Strengthening of the Federal Employment Service so that it can function as an employment finding and placement agency and better serve the unemployment insurance and relief services.
3. Extension of unemployment and old-age insurance under the Social Security Act to groups not now eligible for such benefits.
4. The appointment of a commission of outstanding citizens empowered to engage a staff of technical experts to conduct a thorough study of all phases of unemployment and need for relief to the end that a long-time, realistic relief program may be formulated and presented to Congress for action.

## Special Committee on Structure and Participation

The Executive Committee at its last meeting authorized the appointment of a special committee to consider some of the important questions of structure of the Association, with particular reference to ways in which the various functions and structural parts of the Association may be linked closely together, with the greatest practicable degree of participation within the membership. A report from the special committee is requested in time for discussion at the Delegate Conference, June 24, and is to be submitted by May 1 so that it may be considered by the Executive Committee and put in the hands

of the chapters preparatory to the Conference.

Requests that such a study be made came from several far western chapters and representation from the far west on the committee was provided for, as well as from the far southern chapters. The Executive Committee recognized that problems beyond those of geographical distance existed, however, pointing out the growth of the Association and the greater responsibility assumed by social workers with each step in professional development required careful planning for an effective professional organization.

(Continued on Page 20)



## WHAT ROLE WILL THE SOCIAL WORKER PLAY?

*The question of the adaptability of social work skills in the field of social insurance can be expected to provoke widespread discussion of the relationship between social work training and experience and the administration of insurance provisions. Also the whole extension and expansion of public welfare operation can be expected to provoke discussion on the development of the advisory consultative function of the professional social work group as the less direct application of social work skills in connection with certain governmental welfare functions. Such discussion the Association believes should help to clarify the position of social work as a function based on the premise that special skills (which can be transferred through training) are necessary equipment for any person charged with the administration of programs designed to aid or counsel human beings in difficulty. The following paper by Frank J. Bruno, a member of the faculty of the George Warren Brown Department of Social Work at Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., is the fifth in a series of six discussions of this question prepared for THE COMPASS.*

### *The Relation Between Social Insurance and the Function of Social Workers*

Use of Social Case Work Techniques Not Outlawed in Social Insurances.

By FRANK J. BRUNO.

**I**N ORDER to set down certain starting points, but without attempting to narrow the subject, I should like to submit several propositions on which my argument is built.

1. Social insurance is a social service in the British-sense of the term, or a project in public welfare in the technical sense in the American, as it is a provision to care for a contingency which the beneficiary unaided could not meet.

2. The specific technique employed in administering social insurance for the unemployed is that of the employment exchange.

3. Determination of legal eligibility is not a particular function of the administrator of social insurance; but one he shares with the administrator of any project in public welfare.

4. The social insurances, as contrasted with other forms of public welfare provisions, give the participant contractual rights on which he has a claim without having to show need.

5. The potential beneficiary as he faces old age or a period of worklessness is in quite as much need of the counselling service which social case work has developed as its unique

contribution to social interaction, as is any client of a relief or protective agency.

6. Neither workers in social insurance nor social case work, to which can be added social group work, research and interpretation, are primarily competent to enter the larger field of prevention of unemployment or the establishment of that sort of an economic order in which people may make provisions for themselves against those contingencies which social insurance and public assistance now provide. This does not mean that social workers may not be just as able as anyone else to plan for a better society. It merely means that in the preparation and experience of the social worker there is little which definitely fits him to be wiser in this respect than anyone else who has had a good course in liberal economics. Contact with the need for change does not equip a person for wise planning of such a change.



7. Both social insurance and social work are methods—or as contemporary jargon has it, techniques and skills—and those who are competent in either acquire that competency by mastering a method or a group of methods.

8. Neither social work nor social insurance is a philosophy or a way of life. Practitioners in either field have their philosophies and are conditioned to certain ways of life, but neither is unique to these practitioners. Our philosophy and our way of life are widely shared by many not in either field.

9. Social case work and to almost as large an extent social group work have been developed as distinctive methods in social work as by-products of efforts to alleviate hardships or enrich the lives of the disadvantaged. They are applicable to persons not in situations of social or economic severity, but public opinion has not yet accepted them to any great extent outside of their original fields. This is especially true of social case work.

10. The important function of the actuary in social insurance is outside the competency of the social worker.

#### CONCLUSION

The administrator of social insurance against unemployment must be a master of the methods of employment placement and counselling. This is near enough to social case work to be looked upon as a specialty of that technique. One may question, however, at this point whether it is efficient use of available personnel to require that the worker mastering the methods of the employment exchange should first of all become proficient in social case work. It seems to me the real question here is not whether social case workers as we know them today should handle unemployment compensation, but whether it is possible to prepare a sufficient number of qualified workers for that project; whether they should have special educational preparation and where; and how such standards of personnel can be maintained in that service. There is no reason why schools of social work could not equip themselves to add this task to their other functions. Such a plan would at least insure certain minimum qualification to their graduates which no school of public administration except Harvard now enforces.

Certainly, the use of social case work or social group work techniques is not outlawed in such a relationship as that established between the worker and client in the administration of unemployment compensation or old age annuities. But there are at least two questions as to its practicability, and there

is an alternate possibility. One question is that of time. Will the worker have the chance in the midst of his other duties to enter into the time-consuming relationship demanded by social case work? The other question is whether the beneficiary of insurance would accept a social case work service. On its face, this does not seem a difficult question. Unless a person wishes the services of a social case worker, very little in the way of helpful counselling or giving insight is possible, regardless of the auspices. There does, however, remain the effect on public opinion of a combination of vocational services and social case work. It is fair to ask whether the unique service of the administering of unemployment compensation would not be needlessly handicapped by such a combination. And that consideration leads to the alternate possibility mentioned above. Is it not good social work practice for officials administering social insurance to refer such social problems as they discover to appropriate social case work or social group work agencies, always assuming the client's willingness to accept such advice? This implies that the social insurance worker be enough of a case worker to recognize a problem when he sees it and to prevent the erection of barriers between himself and his client to block the free expression of any anxiety that may be on the client's mind.

This discussion has left uncovered the wide fields of maintenance and improvement of standards of administration and of the basic law. It also omits to mention the greater tasks of devising new methods of compensating the unemployed for their loss of morale and status. These problems, however, are not the exclusive responsibility of any one group, nor within its exclusive competency. They are shared by all thoughtful members of society. To their solution any social worker, whether in social insurance, in social case work or in social group work, may make his contribution regardless of his special skill. The field of community organization, it is to be feared, has never been well covered by social work. Moreover in some public administrations, such as in England, it would be considered unprofessional for the public servant to participate in it. There are obvious difficulties involved in any attempt on the part of a public official to conduct a project in community organization. However, English experience need not be final for us; and we can still hope that the thousands of workers who will man the social insurance offices may be competent to perfect and enlarge the provisions for the care of those whom they serve.



## Social Work Interpreters of the Future?

Where Will They Come From?  
Herewith Is One Point of View.

By LOUIS RESNICK

WHEN the American Association of Social Workers asks for an article on "Where Will Social Work Interpreters of the Future Come From?" that is news. It is very healthy news. It shows concern over where the present interpreters of social work have come from. It shows recognition of the need for more and better interpreters.

The present writer happens to dislike the labels "social work interpreters" or "social work interpretation." They smack of condescension; they advertise, almost boastfully, the fact that the social workers' language needs translation; they give even board members a feeling of inferiority in the presence of the professional and as for the poor "man in the street" or his wife at home certainly they could never understand if you simply told them about social work—it must be interpreted.

Incidentally, has any one ever really defined "social work interpretation"—in any way to meet acceptance or ever bring understanding by social workers themselves? I doubt it! I've attended scores of meetings at which the interpreters and some who called themselves "publicitors" tried to interpret themselves, their objectives, their ideas of what interpretation is or ought to be. And I have always left these meetings either confused or amused at the trouble people will take to avoid saying what they mean.

The sooner we stop talking about interpretation—or listening to the hokum about it—and get down to handing out that simple thing known as information, the sooner will the need for interpretation disappear. Give the people information—simple unvarnished facts—and their interpretation of those facts will take care of itself.

Despite my quarrel with "interpretation," I welcome the opportunity to answer this question "Where will social work interpreters of the future come from," particularly as I am fresh from an experience with 10,000—yes, 10,000—aspiring social work interpreters or informational directors, call them what you will. More of the 10,000 later.

The question as originally asked might be answered briefly in this way:

Social work interpreters of the future will come more and more from newspaper offices and schools of journalism and less and less from social agencies and schools of social work.

*Several people in the field were asked "Where Will Social Work Interpreters of the Future Come From?" The views of Mr. Resnick, director of the Social Security Board Informational Service, are presented herewith. Next month Harald Lund, assistant general director of the Family Welfare Association of America, will present his viewpoint. The views expressed and the conclusions drawn in these articles are those of the writers and it does not necessarily follow that they are endorsed by the editor or the Association.*

The question, however, implies a second and perhaps more significant query: "What is proper training for informational personnel in the field of social work?"

The implied question might be answered briefly thus:

The ideal would be a combination of (1) school of journalism and school of social work educational background, (2) at least several years of experience in newspaper, magazine, radio, movies and the other leading avenues of mass communication, (3) several years' informational service apprenticeship in a variety of social agencies.

Of course, such a combination of educational background and work experience is rare. Consequently of all the thousands of social work interpreters—I am sure that there are thousands who so consider themselves—not more than a dozen or two stand out as having done a really commendable job.

Let's consider for a moment why there should be any concern over where the social work interpreters of the future are coming from.

The National Social Work Publicity Council has 1,250 members. In addition to these there are hundreds of members of the various local publicity councils who are not members of the National Council. Then there are thousands of others who have read a book on how to do social work publicity and a few hundreds who have even taken a course in the subject or at least have attended a three-day institute on interpretation.



A year ago the U. S. Civil Service Commission, at the request of the Social Security Board, announced an examination for Informational Service Representatives and set up the following minimum qualifications:

3. **EDUCATION.**—Except for the substitution provided below, applicants must have successfully completed a full 4-year course leading to a bachelor's degree in a college or university of recognized standing. Additional credit will be given for major work in journalism, English, or the social sciences.
4. **EXPERIENCE.**—Except for the substitution provided below, applicants must have had a combination of the following types of experience varying in responsibility and difficulty according to the grade of the position:

**GENERAL EXPERIENCE.**—Responsible and successful full-time paid experience in writing, editing, or research for newspapers, magazines, or bulletins; in teaching collegiate English, journalism, or any of the social sciences in a recognized institution (the teacher must show a substantial list of writings in social subjects [see paragraph 4 (b) on second page]); or in an executive or junior executive capacity in one or more trade associations or other employer or employee organizations or recognized social agencies, where the supervision of trade journals or the direction of publicity was an important phase of the general duties.

**SPECIALIZED EXPERIENCE.**—Responsible, successful, and progressive experience in writing, editing, or research for newspapers, magazines, or bulletins, in the field of the social sciences, industrial relations, or government regulation of economic affairs.

**Senior Informational Service Representative.**—Applicants must have had 3 years of the general experience and, in addition, 3 years of the specialized experience described above. They must have demonstrated professional leadership and attainments of a high order, the ability to write copy of exceptional merit as evidenced by the list of publications furnished, the editorial capacity and the qualifications necessary to carry on the duties as outlined above.

**Informational Service Representative.**—Applicants must have had 3 years of the general experience and, in addition, 2 years of the specialized experience described above. Such duties must have included work of considerable difficulty and must have demonstrated the ability to carry on the duties as described above especially the capacity for writing copy of outstanding quality and for editing and supervising publications efficiently.

**Associate Informational Service Representative.**—Applicants must have had 2 years of the general experience and, in addition, 1 year of the specialized experience described above. Such experience must have demonstrated the capacity to carry on work of moderate difficulty and the ability to handle independent assignments effectively.

**Assistant Informational Service Representative.**—Applicants must have had 1 year of the general experience and, in addition, 1 year of the specialized experience described above. Such experience must have demonstrated the applicant's ability to carry on important routine duties and have shown him to be a capable journalist.

What happened? Some 10,000 men and women applied for permission to take the examination; 8,000 failed to meet even the minimum requirements and so were not admitted to the examination; of the 2,000 who took the examination, about 1,000 passed with the passing grade as low as 70.

No, there is no dearth of interpreters—that is, if you consider as a social work interpreter every person who would like a job in that capacity.

I said the question was a healthy sign—healthy because it shows perhaps a beginning of comprehension of what has been to me a distressing picture for ten or fifteen years: the picture of a profession—that is the profession of social work, not social work interpretation—which on the whole is doing a much needed job and doing it very well, and which is not only unappreciated but by and large grossly misunderstood.

Here is a profession—one of the newer professions, one of the most poorly paid and not overly-populated—which has, nevertheless, in a very substantial sense saved the country from disaster. And yet it is a profession which has received not the slightest credit for this accomplishment.

It is very easy now to forget the state this country was in just five or six years ago. Recall the breadlines four men deep extending over blocks and blocks—there were 80 of them in New York City at one time. Recall the scene of thousands of men standing in a pouring rain all night in the hope of getting a \$15-a-week emergency work job. Recall the doctors driving taxi-cabs. Recall the white collar men and women selling apples. It is easy now to forget the fear that was predominant at that time.

It is my conviction that social workers, from Harry Hopkins on down to the stair-climbing relief investigator, did more to pull America out of the depression and to avert disorder which might have led to anything—Fascism or worse—than did any other group. Business men might have saved the country or might have at least taken the lead in it; economists and sociologists might have done it; the ministry might have done it; politicians might have done it. As a matter of fact, all these groups helped the administration in Washington do it, but in the opinion of this reporter social workers bore the brunt of the job. They fought—and I say fought advisedly—for Federal relief when it was opposed by everybody else, including many social agency boards. They produced great administrators who have handled successfully unprecedented jobs—administrators of whom



Harry Hopkins is merely the outstanding one of a large army. They not only kept people from starving; they not only primed the pump for business generally and thereby pulled us out of the world's worst depression, but in doing all this they elevated social work standards, brought appreciation of the value of social work to many people in high places and generally gave a very fine account of themselves, Boards of Aldermen, State Legislatures and a few governors notwithstanding.

But how much appreciation of all this is there? Does the man in the street have any notion of social work's contribution? Hardly! And the man in the street is most important because he becomes the State legislator, the member of Congress, the head of an industrial corporation or the voter and community chest contributor, who, in the last analysis, decide whether there shall be social work at all; whether the wherewithal for social work—public or private—shall be provided and in what degree and under what conditions.

To me, the best evidence that social work has failed in the job of making itself and its accomplishments understood is the fact that there is so little public appreciation of what a contribution social workers have made to America in the past decade. But this is not the only evidence of social work's failure in interpretation, publicity, information or public education. As long as the newspapers of the richest city in the world carry such headlines as:

"FATHER DIES SEEKING RELIEF—  
FAMILY OF SIX PENNILESS"

"FAMILY FARE IS OATMEAL  
SO BOY TAKES HIS LIFE"

"BABY LEFT IN HALL, MOTHER TRIES TO  
END LIFE BUT 'SOMEONE WAS ALWAYS  
LOOKING'"

"SANTA IS LATE THREE DAYS TO SIX  
CHILDREN HUNGRY THREE DAYS"

So long as headlines of this sort recur and recur, social workers cannot feel they have done justice to their opportunity or their obligation to keep the community informed even of their existence, their location, the nature of their service, for whom it is intended, let alone to bring about a real understanding of what social work is.

Now, why has social work failed so in this part of its job?

There are many reasons, but outstanding among them in the mind of this observer—after fifteen or twenty years of fairly close observation—is this peculiar fact: that some-

how in this one part of a profession which in every other segment insists on proper training and high standards, the amateur, the semi-professional, the dilettante, the avocationist have been glorified.

In other words, the vast majority of those who are doing what little is being done toward explaining social work are doing this with no substantial professional training or experience in the techniques they are practicing. The saddest part of this situation is not so much that they are willing to do this—because social work interpreters must live—but that their employers and associates who have such high standards for other work in their agencies are so ready to tolerate low standards in the thing called interpretation.

The same group which would throw up its hands in horror at the suggestion that an experienced newspaperman be engaged to do bedside nursing does not hesitate to assign a trained nurse who has never seen the inside of a newspaper office to do what is after all newspaper work.

Some social agency executives who would not think of dictating letters to a secretary who had just begun to take a correspondence course in stenography don't hesitate to have annual reports or news stories and radio scripts written by a secretary who may be expert at shorthand but who has yet to learn that news-writing, magazine-writing, radio script-writing, printing lay-out, news photography, are all special techniques, none of which can be acquired through brief correspondence courses or attendance at luncheon publicity clinics.

And as for giving the job of "interpretation" to any board member of a charity society who shows an interest in the subject or to the dynamic money-raiser of the agency—that is not only common but even "recommended practice"—that is, by the school of thought that talks of "social interpretation."

Aside from the fact that the amateur is not only tolerated but almost glorified as a social work interpreter, the principal drawback to progress in this field has been due to the mistake of associating "interpretation" so closely with money-raising. Too many private social agencies give the responsibility of publicity, interpretation, or information to their money-raisers. Too many social agencies have regarded interpretation merely as a means of raising money.

This is a serious mistake. Its persistent practice has given a large part of the population the impression that social workers are more interested in collecting funds than in practicing social work.



When the writer first came to New York in 1921 and undertook the responsibility of carrying on the public information and education work of a number of social agencies, he asked the chief executive of the first agency which happened to be the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness: "Why do you want publicity?", "Do you want to stimulate financial contributions to the Society or do you want to tell people what causes blindness and how to prevent it?"

The answer from the late Edward M. Van Cleve, then Managing Director of the Society, was: "Don't you concern yourself with money-raising at all. We have a separate department for that. We want to get publicity for the causes of blindness and means of preventing blindness." Lewis H. Carris, Mr. Van Cleve's successor, followed the same wise policy.

From that day, 17 years ago, to this it has been the policy of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness to differentiate sharply between its solicitation of funds and its public information and education. With the result—and I believe one is a direct consequence of the other—that this organization is today one of the best financed social agencies in America. Best financed not so much in the sense that it has a tremendous reserve fund—which it hasn't—but in the sense that its support is so widespread and based so thoroughly on confidence in the work it is doing that neither depressions nor recessions have in any way retarded its steady growth in membership and in the reduction of blindness.

What the NSPOB has done any social agency engaged in a needed activity and rendering real service in its field, can do.

Some of the NSPOB's best contributors have never received an appeal letter from it. They have read about its work or about the need of its work in newspapers and magazines or have heard about it on the air or have otherwise observed it.

Wholly aside from the fact that money-raising and public information and education do not mix well, there is this strong argument against putting these two responsibilities in the hands of one person: They are two entirely separate techniques calling not only for two entirely different kinds of background but, in many respects, even requiring different personalities.

The money-raiser is essentially a salesman or a solicitor. He must not only know how to sell and solicit, he must enjoy doing it. The publicity man, the public information and public education worker is essentially a writer, a creator, an educator. The two just

don't go together. The writer or newspaperman who has any interest in or ability toward selling is a rarity. And the salesman, solicitor or promotionist who has the ability to write or the spirit of the educator is equally rare. One is interested in telling you something; in explaining it, in having you really understand it. The other is interested primarily in getting your signature on the dotted line. There is all the difference in the world between these two.

No matter how attractive the cloak of interpretation you put around your money-raiser, he is still a financial secretary and so recognized not only by the public but even by the Board members who have been so assiduously taught to revere "social interpretation."

Some time back in this article I said the social work interpreters of the future will come more and more from newspaper offices and schools of journalism and less and less from social agencies and schools of social work. Now let me cite one reason—only one of many—(space is not available to tell them all) why I believe that to be true.

It is going to be true in the first place because social work is becoming more and more a Government activity and this trend will be upward rather than downward. And there is greater recognition among public agencies than among private of the importance of informational service as a factor (a) for holding down administrative costs, (b) for rendering service to the public, (c) for insuring financial support by bringing about public understanding rather than emotionalism.

The main motif of 9/10ths of the so-called interpretative materials issued by private social work is to stir the emotions—"Make 'em cry," "Touch the heart and you will reach the pocketbook."

In the Government it is different—and wisely so. In the Government you tell the people facts and they form their own conclusions. They actually think and they think straight without emotionalism.

This is perhaps as well demonstrated by the Social Security program as by any other field of public social work. As these lines are written word comes to me that next Sunday the American Institute of Public Opinion will release in newspapers throughout the country the result of a poll of public opinion showing that after two years there is stronger public sentiment in favor of the Social Security program than ever before. And this despite the fact that the Institute's poll was conducted at the very time when the effort to scare America into the belief that the old-age reserve account was not safe was at its height.

(Continued on Page 28)



# Inservice Training for Social Work

A Working Statement Prepared by the  
AASW for Discussion.

By CHRISTINE ROBB THOMPSON.

**T**HE statement prepared in August 1937 and published below is a partial synthesis of the thinking that has gone into official and unofficial AASW consideration of a difficult matter which confronts the field: the training problem that is involved in the necessity for agencies (especially those under public auspices) today to employ large numbers of persons to carry social service responsibilities for which they are neither professionally equipped nor specifically equipped in point of particular and oftentimes new functions.

This statement was drafted for discussion purposes and has been accordingly made available to officers of the American Association of Schools of Social Work and to members of the Advisory Committee to the Federal Security Board and Children's Bureau on Matters of Personnel.

The AASW and the AASSW have special responsibility for finding their position or positions on what may be the most useful principles in a dynamic relationship between the standardized minimum professional equipment for social work practice and the evolving country-wide means for furthering the total personnel structure of social welfare programs at hand. The statement will, it is hoped, serve to provoke within the Association some fruitful discussion of suggested principles in planning comprehensively for staff development in a manner consistent with the growth of professional education and individual professional status and also, consistent with good social work personnel administration. The question revolves about those places where the educational frontier stops and personnel management and training attach to persons those developing experiences which will reinforce the current practice of social work.

## Preamble

"Inservice training" is a governmental career service term borrowed, I think, from European experience and procedure and not well developed in this country to date. It is, in concept, appropriate to and it covers technical, professional and also other services under governmental auspices. It assumes the provision for and operation of a good classification system and examining procedure for inducting personnel into services, and good promotional procedure; and it involves inter-departmental communication in line with governmental authority.

Better government service with emphasis on the career concept as basic to any tenure concept, has had more impetus in this country recently than at any previous time; and social work functions and positions are involved. It has gotten under way in federal services chiefly, and also in some states. There is at the same time tremendous increase in the number of state and local jurisdictions which have legislative provision for Civil Service, and also many states with newly formalized procedure and machinery of similar character.

Recent expansion in governmental services

is outstanding with respect to social welfare. This expansion of permanent government machinery, it should be remembered, is in addition to the fact that prior to the onset of this economic depression a large part of the welfare services in the United States were under governmental auspices, unequal as they were in extent and management.

It follows that both new and old governmental machinery and provision for its operation is being set up and operated or being modified in operation all over the country.

## The Need for Inservice Training

Social services are variously conceived and understood. The best experience and authority, however, remind us of several things that must be kept in mind with respect to the place of the social services in the matter of inservice training:

It is a professional service. As a developing profession it was caught short in the recent economic depression in that trained personnel were greatly lacking in sufficient numbers (and had previously been lacking); professional education, though established, was and is illy distributed and illy supported



financially; legal status for social workers and therefore protection to the public has not been established. The public accordingly was caught short and was confused by the largest view they had ever been permitted to have of social services, framed as this view was and is in the problems of politics and severe economic stress. Unprecedented problems of social work administration, for which no type of authority was prepared by experience, have confused the question of qualifications for the administrative function in relation to the services administered.

This has done much to cloud the fact that qualified social work personnel is the crux of good social services; that personnel here as in any professional service is the most important part of the equipment to serve; that a program is set up to meet an established human need and that the equipment of personnel administering the services is essential to understanding and meeting that need. Many employing agencies, governmental and private, do not understand these things.

The 32 \* accredited schools of social work graduate annually approximately 1180 \* persons, who are thereby equipped with the *minimum professional* qualifications for practicing social work.

These schools are, and have been for some time, filled to capacity. These schools are illy supported financially. Large numbers of persons eligible to take professional training have not the personal resources with which to do so. The AASW admits annually over 1,000 new members (minimum professional qualifications for practicing social work and interim status for those who have not quite completed this amount of preparation). There is an unknown number somewhere in the vicinity of 70,000 established positions in social work in the United States with and without residence requirements.

The shortage of qualified personnel requires large numbers to be employed on the basis of general educational background and any kind of training, experience and interest that is deemed useful rather than uncongenial to an understanding of social service responsibility; and these persons require supervision and training of a kind that will develop their capacities and insure their ability to carry out functional responsibilities.

Inservice training for social workers should: gear in with total governmental inservice training, procedures and plans and should gear in with available public and private social work experience (in the interest of estab-

lishing this as a professional service, rather than as an unskilled service). Therefore, at the very point of induction of personnel classification of and qualifications for positions in social work should be clear as to professional and non-professional titles, qualifications and functions; and the best precedents available for the strengthening of a professional service are required. The best established professional interests (i.e. AASW and AASSW by their very functions) should develop a larger capacity for effective advisory assistance, oriented to public welfare needs and conditions and convinced about the character of service to be protected,—basically the same for public and private functioning.

Precedent, most of which is found in the longer established career systems and inservice training programs in Europe, makes use of existing resources in the community and also sets up within, under the governmental auspices only those elements of the training program which are not otherwise available to them. This means that educational institutions in the community are utilized for short and long training periods (extramural but by the arrangement of the governmental agency and selected by virtue of the needs of its services and the capacity of the personnel to profit by such opportunities); educationists are brought in to assist in setting up particular courses where necessary; regular supervisory and special functions within departments and with interdepartmental relationships well developed, etc., etc.

### Principles of Operation

Thus inservice training programs are by experience and precedent characterized as: agency administered services (governmental or private) which are reinforcing themselves all along the line of the functions set up and the personnel inducted. The relationship between quality of personnel inducted and the development of their capacities (by means of costly but economical provisions for developing the total equipment in personnel) should be utilized to find the correlations and gaps between the existing selection procedure and the existing inservice training. Presumably the only inservice program that is too costly results from a lack of economy in an inadequate selection procedure at the point of inducting personnel in the face of there being better equipped people available. Otherwise the cost is necessary cost, dictated only by the needs of good services.

There is no element in the governmental inservice training plan that does not have its counterpart presumably in private social

\* Social Work Year Book 1937. p. 129.



agency planning for staff education. Immediate needs may be different; different parts of the possible range of such a program may get under way faster because of the personnel and service needs at hand; but they will presumably not be different in kind and range of possibility. The functional differences between public and private welfare programs will change certain content aspects of the training program which each sets up and develops, because it is in either case planned by and oriented to the agency, with respect to its particular responsibilities for service. In either case personnel is its investment and further development of personnel at whatever levels presented by existing personnel is protection of that investment.

Out of the experience of social work practice, it has been possible to shape professional education (transmittable experience). Advance in professional education emerges as further experience and practice find what is of general value for purposes of transmission as a concentrated educational discipline; and this will begin where established professional discipline through those who have submitted to it learns what more is needed for current practice which appears to be basically valuable.

What is important for staff to learn in order to carry their responsibilities as set up in a particular agency, involves both basic knowledge about social work and certain special knowledge with reference to that agency's operation. There is if qualified people are available unnecessary trial and error in learning on the job basic experience (which is available in concentrated form; i.e. professional education). The inservice training or staff education should therefore be as nearly as possible (depending upon the supply of qualified personnel) that which cannot be at present (and possibly at any time) learned in the school of social work.

The practical situation in this field which has an under supply of qualified personnel, is that inservice training must necessarily carry a larger burden than should be expected in the future. That is to say, it will have to reinforce persons who have little of the knowledge which is basic to social work practice, through the development of adequate supervision by persons who have that basic knowledge and who have in addition the capacity to transmit that to others on the job and without the opportunity to learn before having responsibility for doing. There will have to develop additional ways of imparting to untrained people knowledge which will be needed as a reservoir in the handling of unknown situations but which within the super-

visor's function cannot be as readily injected into the process of assisting on immediate pressing routine situations as is possible in the case in the classroom. Immediate agency situations and their effective handling do not ordinarily permit, in other words, a substitute for broad professional education. There is therefore great limitation in the kind of individual responsibility that can develop out of the specifically supervised experience in one agency function.

It should be clear that inservice training, therefore, is not a substitute for professional education. It is something different at any of its many facets because instead of being a professional discipline in broad preparation, it is a service agency's administratively constructed plan to reinforce whatever it has in personnel to do whatever it is functionally its business to do effectively. The agency may utilize professional educational facilities outside its wall, but it will do this because it is functionally important to do so and only with well chosen members of its personnel and only in order to carry out operations for which they are or will be responsible.

If an inservice training plan includes provision for leaves of absence for professional education in accredited schools of social work it should be because that professional training is considered by the agency to be of importance to the agency's operations plus the opinion that there are people on the staff whose performance indicates capacity to profit by that educational training with respect to their contribution to the agency's services (and presumably because persons already with such equipment were not available at the time incumbents were selected).

If a well thought out inservice training plan includes only strong provisions for supervisory personnel and their responsibilities in connection with services performed by less qualified people, it will be because that is judged to be the best way within present resources to reinforce the total agency service.

If, on the other hand, a training program credits toward promotion, or any other assignment of responsibility, an indiscriminate course or group of courses or other work inside or outside of the agency, without taking responsibility for the relationship of: this additional experience, its recipients and the agency whose services it should affect—it is not a functionally sound program of inservice or staff education.

If only one or two facets in the range of an inservice training program are used in a plan, because of budgetary limitations, these one or two facets should be chosen on what is the most essential beginning in a training



program for that agency and should be recognized as such and not credited with being a completed program.

If such a training program includes provision by which staff members may or must supplement gaps in their general education, it will be because the agency considers such broad educational background to be of value in advancing the agency's services and considers certain individuals capable of advancement and continued employment; (or, it will be because the agency's tenure provisions require that it continue to employ those who have been inducted into the service without sufficient cognizance of their general educational background in relation to duties to be performed).

#### OUTLINE OF POSITION WHICH SHOULD CLARIFY THE EXTENT AND LIMITATIONS OF INSERVICE TRAINING (OR STAFF EDUCATION)

- I. Staff education or inservice training should be a planned program rather than a single device.
- II. It should mean the agency's acceptance of responsibility for the reinforcement of personnel already inducted and advisedly being retained on the basis of its own selection procedure and for the effective administration of its particular services.
- III. The provisions of the plan for staff education should be made by the agency whether they include only intramural or extramural resources—professional or general education or specific agency orientation.
- IV. Since it is the agency's plan and provision, it involves agency cost whether in direct expenditure for additional personnel, direct or indirect funds for scholarships, or for the employment of part-time services of outside institutions, borrowed resources (which involve some obligation), leave of absence with or without money assistance, etc.
- V. It is an expenditure which if well planned is justified on the basis of services which the agency is set up to administer. Thus, each provision whether for personnel with professional status or personnel without professional status (which should be recognized in the agency's classification system), should be administratively oriented—that is, related to personnel equipment of the

agency where that is of recognized importance to the agency's established function.

- VI. The professional status which a staff member may acquire in the course of opportunity provided him on the job and through any part of the inservice program, is of secondary importance to the agency. (Of first importance is that he is one of the individuals judged to have the capacity to profit by either this or any non-credit experience and the capacity to put it to the agency's use.)
- VII. It follows that some of the provisions will not result in giving the individual professional status and that it is only where the agency's need and the staff member's capacity and assignment happen to coincide that professional status for the individual may result, or that he may thus become eligible to advance to a professional classification. (In the case of staff members who already have to their credit what constitutes established minimum professional requirements, the additional training and experience provided by the program for staff education can (for him) add nothing to professional status, except as an individual, until such time as advanced credit is established by a professional social work association.
- VIII. The program of staff education should assume provision for the growth of the staff members within the agency. As a result there should evolve agency evaluational capacity with provision for flexibility in the assignment of responsibilities. In other words, a staff member's usefulness is not static and may develop in one function better than in another in recognition of which there should be evaluation of performance and possibility for transfer of function within the range of classifications for which individuals may be professionally eligible.
- IX. Unlike basic professional education, inservice training should not aim to give the individual an equipment which would insure his qualifications for a position elsewhere. Only where another agency's function and staff needs are sufficiently comparable will an individual find immediately transferable his increased equipment under this plan. In the case of government agencies this may be more frequent



than otherwise, because of interdepartmental federal, state, and local counterparts. In other words, the plan should concern itself with efficiency in connection with continued employment of personnel in one or another capacity within the agency.

- X. Since inservice training is at no point a substitute for established professional equipment, it gains for the individual work-credit rather than professional status per se. Work-credit in the advanced stages is a plus value above minimum professional equipment. Work-credit at the pre-professional levels is not a plus value above or substitute for minimum professional equipment.
- XI. The strongest link in an inservice training program has to do with the functioning-teaching connection (supervision) between the better equipped and the lesser equipped personnel.
- XII. Lack of preparation among large numbers on the staff puts too heavy a burden on the supervisory function with respect to knowledge that is lacking and should therefore be reinforced by various devices for group instruction, intramural, extramural or both, but related throughout to the agency's needs and to the agency's judgment on how to meet those needs with respect to the development of staff which is known to be the best available material and therefore to be retained.
- XIII. Theoretical excessive cost should be reckoned only with respect to (1) unnecessary induction of unqualified personnel, (2) indiscriminating, or unintegrated, plans to provide for agency needs in terms of staff equipment. Existing budgetary limitations due to outside exigencies should not be confused with training plans as such; that is, a principle or plan of training abandoned because of budgetary insufficiency should not be made to appear as an unsound plan per se.
- XIV. Limited financial resources should be recognized as such in which case a training program, inadequate to the agency's needs, will rest its case there where there is possibility of change, and will not rest its case on a shortsighted argument that present provision can be made adequate.

## ***New Committee to Collect Specification and Examination Data***

PLANS for the Association to collect current information regarding specifications and examination procedure for public welfare positions under formal merit plans in operation throughout the country are being worked out by a temporary committee headed by Robert T. Lansdale of the New York School of Social Work. The services of Mr. Lansdale have been secured for this project on a part-time basis for three months.

The Association has for some time been aware of the need for having public personnel data available in order to furnish chapters with information on the best public personnel practice, in order to furnish similar information to public personnel bodies, and in order to furnish a background from which committees of the Association might draw up recommended classification plans for public welfare agencies.

At the outset the aim will be to secure material on the classification plans now in vogue, including salaries and personnel requirements, and material on examination procedure. These data will be secured from the Federal government, from states having formal personnel requirements, from major counties and cities having merit plans, and from state welfare departments which establish personnel requirements for local agencies.

To make this work effective, plans are being made for the organization of the enterprise, in relation to (a) priority of subjects to be taken up, (b) methods of gathering data, (c) methods of assembling data, (d) methods for keeping data current, (e) use to be made of the data by the Division on Government and Social Work, Division on Personnel Standards, and the chapters.

The following members of the Association have been appointed to the temporary steering committee for the project: Elizabeth Cosgrove, Mrs. Ella Weinfurther Reed, Lewis Meriam, Linda Wharton, Harriet Parsons, James Brunot, Harriett Rinaldo, Mrs. Hazel Hendricks, Elsie Bond, Fred Zappolo.

The committee is holding an early meeting to which a number of public personnel administrators are being invited as consultants.



## Michigan Supreme Court Upholds Merit Tenure

Detroit Chapter Probation Defense Committee  
Instituted Action That Brought Decision.

THE Supreme Court of Michigan by a vote of six to two has ruled that six probation officers, discharged by the Recorder's Court of Detroit, held office "during good conduct and not for a definite period." This action reverses the finding of Hon. Victor D. Sprague in the Circuit Court who upheld the action of the Recorder's Court, and sustains the contention of James K. Watkins, attorney representing the probation officers, to the effect that they were appointed for indefinite term and held office during good behavior.

When this is written (Jan. 12) the Judges of the Recorder's Court have voted to ask a rehearing of the case. This request has not yet come before the Supreme Court for action.

The majority opinion was written by Justice George E. Bushnell and was concurred in by five associates, Justices Howard Wiest, Louis E. Fead, Walter H. North, Henry M. Butzel and Bert D. Chandler.

More than ordinary interest attaches to this case. The Recorder's Court of Detroit is known to students of penology as one of the most interesting unified adult courts in the United States. When organized in 1920 much emphasis was placed upon the development and extension of probation. Judges of the Recorder's Court have included Hon. Frank Murphy, Governor of Michigan; Hon. Harry Keidan, one of the best known jurists of the state and now a member of the Circuit Court of Wayne County; and Hon. Pliny W. Marsh of Detroit, member of the bar and student of judicial reform. Chief probation officers since the reorganization of the probation department include Edwin Denby, later a member of the President's Cabinet; Edwin Mulock; Fred R. Johnson; and George T. Gaston who is the present Chief. Joel R. Moore, now Warden of Jackson Prison and recently supervisor of the Federal Probation Service, was for years assistant chief probation officer of this court.

Under new legislation effective in 1937, local probation officers of Michigan are appointed by the new State Corrections Commission upon recommendation of the Judges whose courts they serve. Prior to 1937 they were appointed by the Governor upon similar judicial recommendation. This case was initiated in 1936 under the practice then pre-

vailing. For many years it was generally understood and accepted that probation officers could not be removed except for cause and following a hearing.

The action taken by the Recorder's Court under the fiction of "failure to reappoint," which actually meant the discharge of six probation officers, followed an election of judges of the court in 1935. Two new judges were chosen at this election. The dismissals represented an endeavor to allocate personnel among members of the bench after the election.

Following the decision of Judge Sprague in the Circuit Court, unfavorable to the probation officers, a Probation Defense Committee was formed among social workers of Detroit. This group was composed of the then chairman and three former chairmen of the Detroit Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers. Members of the committee were Pauline Gollub, Sarah Selminski, Lois E. Tillet and Fred R. Johnson. A financial appeal for funds to assist in financing the cost of court action met with a cordial response from both social workers and interested volunteers.

One paragraph of the letter issued by the Probation Defense Committee reads as follows:

"Not as a personal matter, but in the public interest, the case will be appealed to the Supreme Court for review. While public spirited citizens are endeavoring to secure merit and civil service as the basis for appointment of public officials, it seems illogical for us in Detroit and Wayne County to remain silent while a reverse process is followed by a Court which, in many other respects, has been progressive and forward looking."



The six probation officers unjustly dismissed included two well known members of the staff, Mrs. Kathleen Lowrie who was director of the women's division, and Ralph Hall Ferris who had charge of domestic relations. Mrs. Lowrie, former chairman of the Detroit Chapter and former member of the national executive committee of the American Association of Social Workers, is now associated with the Social Security Board. Mr. Ferris is now serving as assistant director of the new State Corrections Commission in which capacity he has charge of the development of probation throughout Michigan.

The decision of the Supreme Court clarifies the interpretation of Michigan law governing probation officers. The contention of the Judges of the Recorder's Court was that such officials were governed by the Tenure of Office Act of 1877. This act provides that unless the term of office is expressly stipulated, appointment is for the term of office of the governor which in Michigan is two years. Had the ruling of Judge Sprague been upheld, security of tenure of probation officers would have been destroyed. Justice Bushnell ruled that the statute of 1877 did not apply since the uniform probation act of 1913 with later amendments was in no sense ambiguous and provided for tenure of office during good conduct.

Friends of professional social work and of probation throughout the United States should be heartened by the decision of the Supreme Court of Michigan. If probation is to succeed as a method of dealing with human frailty, the terms of service of probation officers must not be jeopardized at every election. When competent personnel is chosen, effective service should be protected through security of tenure.

A state civil service act went into effect in Michigan on January 1st of this year. This will protect state services in the fields of social work such as family welfare, mental hygiene, children's work, and the probation service of the State Corrections Commission as distinct from local courts. It is believed that the new state civil service act may also be construed to cover adult probation in local courts, since local officers are appointed by state authority although paid by county and local funds. In any event the decision of the Supreme Court will further safeguard probation in local courts. It follows, since security

of tenure now appears to be established, that circuit and local courts in cooperation with the State Corrections Commission, must exercise a high degree of care in the choice of probation officers.

Perhaps of most significance to members of the American Association of Social Workers is the fact that social workers of Detroit and Michigan were unwilling to have injustice visited upon their associates in a public service, to the point where they banded together and insisted that the issues involved must be carried to a court of last resort for adjudication.

F.R.J.

## Committee on Structure

(Continued from Page 7)

Many problems exist for the Association in connection with chapter administration and the development of means for membership participation. Others are in connection with the committees and their assignments, with the Delegate Conference and other means of direct and indirect communication between various parts of the Association and with the Executive Committee and the Ad Interim Committee in which the general direction of the Association is lodged. The Association's present organization and activities, seen in the perspective of the way these have developed, were recognized as important in considering new assignments which a special study might find needed.

Plans for the special committee's activities will include efforts to discover needs of the chapters and members for Association activities which it might be found possible to add to the present program, as well as efforts to interpret the basic requirements of the special kind of organization indicated for a professional association in the field of social work.

President Swift has appointed Conrad Van Hyning, former State Welfare Commissioner of Florida, now in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., as chairman of the committee. Those asked to serve as members of the committee are: Miss Laura De Veuve, San Francisco, Cal.; Mrs. Eleanor McCreery, Los Angeles, Cal.; Miss Mary Raymond, New Orleans, La.; Miss Margaret Wagner, Cleveland, O.



## Arkansas Chapter Seeks Ruling by Court

Friendly Legal Action Begun to Test Legality of State Welfare Board Selection of County Directors.

**L**EGAL action in the form of a friendly suit has been instituted by the Arkansas Chapter to secure a court ruling on the legality of the action of the State Welfare Board in selecting county welfare directors without regard to an existing civil service eligible list. The suit was brought in behalf of Mrs. W. A. Moore, former director of Dallas county, who was passed over for appointment by the state board despite the fact that she successfully passed a civil service examination for the position of county director.

The action by the chapter is in the form of a request for an injunction to restrain the state board from approving appointments of any person as a county director unless such persons have passed regular civil service examinations and are included on the list of civil service eligibles; and further requests that the chief finance officer of the state be enjoined from including the name of Mrs. Moore's successor (Ruth E. Buzbee) on payrolls of the state welfare department and that the Civil Service Commission be enjoined from approving such payrolls as long as they include the salary of Miss Buzbee.

The action really is intended to test a recent ruling of the Attorney General, who, in an attempt to settle the controversy, held that county welfare directors were in fact county employees rather than state employees and as such were not subject to the provisions of the state civil service law.

Mrs. Moore was appointed and served in the public welfare department of Dallas county, as created by a special act in 1935, until the act was repealed by new legislation in 1937. On February 5, 1937, she was appointed director of the department. On February 18 of that year, the State Board of Public Welfare set up requirements of education and experience for county directors and certified these requirements to the Civil Service Commission.

In July of 1937, Mrs. Moore satisfied the Civil Service Commission she met the required standards and successfully passed both written and oral examinations for the post. Her name was then placed on the civil service eligible list. According to her complaint, as filed in the request for an injunction, she was not appointed to the post but was succeeded on November 20, 1937, by Miss Buzbee, who, according to the action, does not meet the

requirements of education and experience set up by the State Board of Welfare; has not passed the civil service examination for the post, and is not on the civil service eligible list.

The suit brought in behalf of Mrs. Moore takes issue with the Attorney General's ruling that "a county welfare director is a county employee," pointing out the salary of a county welfare director is paid entirely from state funds and that "county directors have no powers or duties except such as are designated by the state commissioner of public welfare."

In connection with the action, the following statement was issued by Miss Erle Chambers, president of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers:

"The Arkansas Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers is squarely behind Mrs. Moore in this proceeding.

"The suit is a friendly one to get an interpretation of our Public Welfare law. As social workers we are profoundly alive to the hardship and human suffering which would certainly attend the withdrawal of Federal funds, should Arkansas fail to carry out the program already approved by Washington authorities. The Arkansas Welfare law has been widely publicized throughout the nation as a model and this favorable publicity has been given the state by people outside the state who were sure that the law establishes standards of administration.

"The chapter is an organization of professional social workers and is the logical group to ask the court for an interpretation of the act. The very purpose of professional organizations, whether medicine, law, architecture or social work, is to protect the public by requiring that persons offering for service be qualified under the law to render it competently. There have been conflicting opinions



on our Welfare Act, and we are seeking this interpretation in the interest of the public purse which contributes huge sums and in the interest of the client who receives his part, however small.

"If the act does not set professional standards, and anyone, however uninformed and inexperienced, may be allowed to tinker with human personality, the public should know that fact, and be in a position to take such action as it may desire, through its elected representatives in the legislature, to correct the condition. If, on the other hand, the law does provide for administration by qualified personnel, it should be enforced.

"We believe that every right-minded official, whether in county or state, connected with the whole situation, will welcome the clarification of a court decision, and hence we are seeking through this friendly suit the information which will assist all concerned to intelligent handling of this tremendous problem."

Raymond Rebsamen, chairman of the State Welfare Board, who is named in the action, in commenting on the suit declared that he had indicated to the Arkansas Chapter that the "friendly test" was entirely satisfactory to him. He said:

"It is my understanding that the suit was held up while Governor Bailey was seriously ill, but that now they finally decided to go ahead. We'll be only too glad to get an interpretation of the law by the Supreme Court. At present we are operating under our only legal guide, the attorney general, who ruled that the county directors are not state employees.

"If the court finds that the directors are state employees, then we'll use the civil service lists to make appointments."



## Delegate Conference Bulletin

*The following bulletin in regard to plans for the 1938 Delegate Conference went out to Chapter chairmen from the national office on January 19th.*

There are now about five months before the 1938 Delegate Conference, which is to be held in Seattle, Washington. The dates definitely set are Friday and Saturday, June 24 and 25.

The program of the 1938 Conference will be different from those which have gone be-

fore. The Committee on Conference Program and the Executive Committee have given this problem considerable attention and it has been decided that this Conference will discuss the problems of the Association as an organization; its purposes and program, its structure and organization.

Final plans for the Conference program cannot be made at this time, but each of the Association's committees is being asked to plan its program so as to submit a report to the Executive Committee in the spring. This will provide the Program Committee with opportunity to have those reports sent to chapters in advance of the Conference. It will also make it possible for the Committee to make selections of particular reports for presentation and discussion at the Conference. As it is planned that texts of reports will be sent out prior to the Conference, time for discussion of the Association program in greater measure than before will be provided.

The Committee on Conference Program has asked that these plans be called to your attention now particularly so that chapters will have an opportunity to lay before the Association matters which they wish to have incorporated into the Conference program, or on which emphasis is needed.

The Association builds and develops its program on the interests of members, as these are promoted through chapter discussion and action, reported to the national association which can provide a link between these various activities, and which can to some extent advance those interests through the operation of division, committee, and staff work. Under the present plans the 1938 Delegate Conference would provide an additional and important link in the Association's effort to develop an aggressive attack on problems of professional advancement in social work.

The COMPASS, bulletins to chapters, minutes, etc., will contain material on activities which are under way. In so far as possible, the program should be devoted to discussion of subjects which have had previous chapter discussion, and then have been further seasoned and correlated, through work of national committees. Reports which will be prepared for discussion at the Conference will represent the summaries of the activities undertaken during the year.

Suggestions from chapters concerning subjects which they wish to launch on their way for Conference discussion will be welcomed by all national committees. It is important to have subjects submitted as early as possible, so that work may progress at the winter and spring committee meetings.



## Politics in Pennsylvania, Part II

The Second of Two Articles on the Attack on the Department of Assistance and the Results.

By ALVIN GUYLER.

A NEWS release of January 6 carried to the people of Pennsylvania news that Karl de Schweinitz had "resigned as Secretary of the State Department of Assistance and administrator of Pennsylvania's \$138,000,000 relief system."

In his farewell statement the retiring secretary charged that the Governor in appointing the county assistance boards "had loaded them with political appointees sponsored by Democratic county chairmen." "Membership on many of the boards," he said, "promises nothing better than what the old poor boards represented. It is no longer a question of preventing politics from entering relief. The door has already been opened."

The statement was front-page news in every important newspaper in the state and buried Governor Earle's statement, released two hours earlier, designed to end the long-drawn-out conflict, by his announcement that he was retaining de Schweinitz but assigning Secretary of Welfare Arthur W. Howe, Jr., to make certain fundamental changes in the conduct of the department.

The Governor in his statement had said, "The recent investigation to determine if the department was inefficient disclosed an honest administration of unemployment relief and public assistance and more than that it showed an absolutely non-political administration."

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* (anti-Earle Administration), commenting editorially at this point, stated: "In forcing from the Public Assistance Department the man who has given, according to the Governor himself, 'honest and absolutely non-political' relief administration, he satisfied only the political wolf pack that has hungered for the relief spoils for the last three years."

The *Philadelphia Record* of the same day (pro-Earle Administration) referred to de Schweinitz's resignation as "an ungraceful exit" and said: "Public assistance is too important to be made a political plaything. It is also too important to be made the object of personal pique and the theatre for ill-timed dramatic gestures."

Newspapers the following morning carried statements which clearly indicated that there was great difference of opinion regarding the de Schweinitz resignation even on the part of

those who had battled tooth and nail for a non-political administration of public assistance.

Judge Ralph Smith of Pittsburgh, a member of the Governor's committee that had studied the problems of public assistance in Pennsylvania and had made recommendations to the Governor resulting in the creation of the new Department of Public Assistance, was caustic in his comments. Referring to Governor Earle, he said: "It was an act of magnificent political courage \* \* \*." Speaking of Karl de Schweinitz, he said: "de Schweinitz in resigning with an abusive tirade displayed a volatile and high strung temperament \* \* \*."

The comment of Judge Smith was a serious blow because he had waged an aggressive battle for passage of the legislation which had given Pennsylvania its modern public assistance program. Young and liberal, he had never been lacking in courage and had fought side by side with social workers on more than one occasion.

On the other side Earl G. Harrison, President of the Public Charities Association and chairman of the citizens' committee that had arranged more than 600 public meetings last year to interpret the proposed public assistance legislation, in a public statement said: "In the opinion of a great many public-minded people throughout the state the de Schweinitz letter was a forthright statement as to why he could not continue in the situation which had been created and permitted to develop and which from the standpoint of good administration was intolerable."



Democratic National Committeewoman, Emma Guffey Miller, sister of Senator Joseph Guffey, who as the accuser of de Schweinitz had become the spearhead of the political attack, said she was "satisfied with the outcome."

To complete the picture let us go back and bring up to date the picture as outlined in the January COMPASS. That article outlined the attack made upon Karl de Schweinitz by Democratic Committeewoman Emma Guffey Miller. De Schweinitz lost no time in making Mrs. Miller's charges public, along with his categorical replies. This material did not make good reading from Mrs. Miller's point of view because it showed conclusively that she was irritated because the Department of Assistance had not been opened to the political patronage.

The Miller attack was too much for many of the leaders of the Democratic party, who counselled the Governor to refuse to yield to the Guffey influence. It failed to slow up the National Committeewoman however and as a matter of fact brought forth a second attack equally emotional and full of inaccuracies. The Governor's advisors, trying to save him from the horns of a dilemma, suggested the appointment of an investigating committee to study all phases of the problem and have a report on the Governor's desk when he returned from a trip to Sweden. The day after the committee's appointment the Governor sailed for his Scandinavian tour, and except for radiograms was able to forget about his problem.

Upon his return late in December he was immediately made aware of the fact that his investigating committee of three subordinate office holders had only tended to place him still further out on a limb. Stories abounded of the very keen enjoyment certain politicians were getting out of the Governor's predicament. No matter what his decision, it would be wrong because they felt he must offend either the politicians to whom he was looking for support of his future political ambitions or the civic groups bolstered by labor who were insisting that politics be kept out of the administration of public assistance.

Hoping to extricate himself, the Governor called a group to Harrisburg to hear the report of his investigating committee. The meeting lasting all day was held on December 20. The politicians were all present, including the chief accuser, Mrs. Miller. The Governor had also invited members of his Committee

on Public Assistance and a few other representatives of civic groups. Attendance was, however, denied to representatives of the Philadelphia Area Citizens' Committee on Public Assistance because they had been bold enough to call to the attention of the Governor's investigating committee the fact that they had ignored every requirement of sound, scientific investigation. Although the report of the investigating committee had been in the Governor's hands for more than a week, no copy had been given to de Schweinitz beforehand and he had no access to the report during the all-day inquisition. Although advised to do so, he had declined to avail himself of legal counsel, and as a result the Emma Guffey Miller supporters had a Roman holiday. One of those present has referred to the proceedings as "about as sporting as shooting mackerel in a barrel." Between the halves both teams were invited to the Executive Mansion to partake of a buffet supper Mrs. Earle had prepared. The evening session lasted until almost midnight.

Expected to answer without preparation charges the nature of which he was unfamiliar with until they were read to him, the Secretary of Assistance was placed at a disadvantage. He was, however, able to bring out into the open the fact that several staff members of the investigating group were discharged employees of his department. It was definitely established that one investigator had been employed by the Governor's investigating committee upon his release from prison on an embezzlement charge. The reports of eight reputable accounting firms that had given the assistance department a clean bill of health were passed over lightly by the investigators. At the termination of the all-day session de Schweinitz was given a copy of the report and a week to file his answers. The reports of the accounting firms were never made available to him despite repeated demands.

At this point, the Pennsylvania Division requested the AASW to make available to Pennsylvania the services of Thomas Hoare to work with members of the Association in an effort to carry the battle to the people of Pennsylvania through every device available to us. The request was granted and a plan worked out calling for the securing of legal counsel, the formation of a statewide citizens' committee, the staging of public hearings, and the use of newspapers and radio, to air all phases of the controversy.



The campaign was to be based on the premise that the real issue at stake was whether or not the citizens of Pennsylvania wanted decent, humane, efficient, non-political administration of public assistance or whether they wanted the department to become a football of partisan politics. The strategy outlined was designed to build up to a request to the Governor for an open hearing (open to the press and general public) at which counsel for the Secretary of Assistance would demand an opportunity to examine and cross-examine all members of the Governor's investigating committee, members of its staff, and Mrs. Emma Guffey Miller on the ground that the citizens of Pennsylvania were entitled to know all the facts and to form their own opinion of the merits of the case.

Although agreeing to the plan at the outset, de Schweinitz later withdrew on the ground that he was completely disgusted with the entire proceedings and the attacks on his department and was anxious to file his reply to the charges preferred immediately rather than to lengthen the controversy. Consequently, the plan was dropped. De Schweinitz decided to fire his remaining shot and call it a day. On December 8 he submitted to Governor Earle a fifty-page report containing the answer of the Department of Public Assistance to the report of the investigating committee. On January 3 he submitted a ninety-page document shooting sky-high charges made by State Treasurer Clair Ross.

At this point, even David Stern's pro-Democratic *Philadelphia Record* came out strongly for de Schweinitz's retention, commenting editorially as follows: "Certainly there is nothing to justify the venom with which this public-spirited citizen has been attacked. There is no reason to believe that those who attacked him would have done as good a job as he has done."

The Governor, now alarmed by the precarious position he had been manoeuvred into, decided to try to extricate himself by patting his Secretary of Assistance on the back with one hand while he slapped him with the other. But at this point Karl de Schweinitz resigned attacking the Earle Administration. The closing paragraph of his resignation stated:

"It is now time that the Administration should take responsibility for its assistance program and should demonstrate the kind of efficiency that it purports to be concerned

with. There is no sound basis for my remaining as Secretary of Public Assistance, and I have therefore resigned, effective today."

*The Bulletin Index*, Pittsburgh's weekly news magazine, reporting on his resignation, had this to say:

"To the man in the street, bewildered by the maze of charges and counter-charges and eyeing apprehensively a state relief roll climbing again at the rate of 7,000 a week to depression levels, this, by experience, can mean but one thing: when politicians begin attacking trained social workers, a messy infiltration of Politics in Relief is taking place behind the scenes."

To what extent politics will be allowed to enter and dominate the Pennsylvania Department of Public Assistance only time will reveal. The spotlight will be on Pennsylvania for some time to come and every move will be watched by those interested and concerned with non-political relief.

### Committee Meetings

The following national committee meetings have been scheduled for the near future:

Nominating Committee, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, January 31 and February 1.

Division on Employment Practices, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, February 2 and 3.

National Membership Committee, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, February 4 and 5.

Ad Interim Committee, 52 Gramercy Park, New York City, February 11.

Committee on Conference Program, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, February 16 and 17.

Committee on Chapter Organization and Programs, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, February 18 and 19.

Special Committee on Structure and Participation, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, February 20 and 21.

Executive Committee Meeting, 52 Gramercy Park, New York City, February 25 and 26.

Division on Personnel Standards, 52 Gramercy Park, New York City, March 18 and 19.

This copy of THE COMPASS came to you neatly enclosed in a postal mailing wrapper to keep it fresh and clean in its travels through the mails. This innovation costs a little more but we believe the expenditure is justified. Your comments are welcomed.



## Participation in Non-Chapter Areas

A Summary Progress Report Submitted to Committee on Chapter Organization and Programs.

By AGNES McCREERY

**T**HE Committee on Chapter Organization and Programs has been making a study of the special problem of active participation in the professional Association by members in non-chapter areas. Correspondence was started by Mrs. Dorothy Castle, of Cleveland, Chairman of the Committee last year, and a report was made to a recent meeting of the Committee summarizing the correspondence, by Miss Agnes McCreery, of Iowa City.

The Committee has plans for following up this correspondence including the appointment of a continuing sub-committee.

Two types of letters were sent, one to Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming and Mississippi, which have fewer than eight members each; the other to West Virginia, Vermont, North Dakota, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Montana, and Maine, which states have eight or more members.

The letters sent to the first group of states expressed the interest of the organization in its isolated members; mentioned the use they might make of THE COMPASS, asked if the member wished to receive the bulletins sent to chapter chairmen; and invited correspondence with the national office in regard to professional problems, especially the possibilities for professional contacts. The letters to the states having more members asked, in addition, if there was any possibility that members might meet together informally or develop correspondence with other members on professional matters.

### Summary of Letters

According to the National office 107 letters were sent to members in non-chapter areas in Idaho, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. There were 38 replies, some of them writing extensively. Some of the letters represent the pooled opinions of several members in various states. This is true of letters from Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota, and West Virginia. As a result the National office has included 25 additional correspondents on its list to receive mimeographed material.

Of the states that have eight or more members, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire,

North Dakota, and West Virginia are considering some form of organization. A very thoughtful letter from New Mexico gives the opinion that the size of the state and the fact that each person is so busy with her own job make it impractical for the nine members to organize though they need the "professional food" meetings would give. The one letter from Vermont (which has nine members) states that they have decided against organization because they think it would be discrimination against workers not eligible. A letter from Idaho which has at present only five members asks for information about chapter organization because they are hoping to have more members in the state soon.

Practically all of the members from the states mentioned above asked for bulletins. This is true also of the states having only a few members. There is on file at least one reply from each of these states. However, the only person writing from Nevada expected to leave last June.

### Comments on the Letters

The letters are almost unanimous in expressing the need of the isolated worker for help in keeping up his own professional standards. The need is not only for information but for the encouragement that comes from personal contacts. The members seem to feel that the bulletins and correspondence from the National office will help to supply this need. Those members who are thinking of organization, formal or informal, seem to think of the meetings largely in terms of opportunities for professional contacts to increase their personal efficiency. There are few suggestions in the letters that the writers have



thought further as to the usefulness of the bulletins or of a local chapter. (Possibly, this statement is unfair, since the letter of inquiry did not ask specifically about needs other than for professional contacts.)

The importance of the personal equation is brought out clearly in the letters. On the one hand, it is encouraging to find so large a proportion of the correspondents willing to take responsibility for planning meetings. If the National office or this committee can guide the interest, something very worth while should be accomplished. On the other hand in Vermont the question has been raised as to whether organizing a chapter would not bring up the question of discrimination against persons in social work who are not eligible for membership.

The last mentioned letter raises the question as to how widespread the writer's opinion is. The letter goes on to say that many of the workers of the state are not eligible for AASW membership. "It seems better to meet with them than try to be exclusive." This idea is not expressed in any of the other letters.

The different states present entirely different situations not only as to the number of Association members but in many other ways. The Eastern members find it comparatively easy to go to out-of-state meetings and so keep up their professional relationships. The Western members, of course, find this impossible. Within the states, there is a great deal of variation in the amount of organization. In West Virginia there is not even a State Conference. Some of these states seem considerably more advanced than others in their professional thinking.

### **Suggestions for Further Work on This Project**

Whatever is done will need, it seems to me, to be on a state by state basis. The form letters have given us an idea of the situation and problems in each area. Now, with the exception of sending out the bulletins, probably the needs of each state should be considered separately.

It would be valuable for either the National office or the committee to attempt to develop leadership for AASW and social work in general in each state. By this I mean work with promising individuals, perhaps beginning with the need expressed in so many of the replies for help in keeping up the worker's own professional standards. For this purpose, it would seem worth while to continue sending the bulletins to members who have asked for them in the states not organized. If it is

possible for the National office to do so, it seems to me it would be worth while to encourage further correspondence on professional problems. Interviews at National Conference were requested by several. These might be encouraged. It is possible that these non-chapter members might make use of a discussion meeting at National Conference.

There seems also to be a need to stimulate groups considering organization to think through more clearly the use of a local chapter. Much of the criticism made of old chapters might be eliminated in new ones if they were encouraged to take plenty of time to consider their plans, what they will try to accomplish, the chapter's relationship to other social workers, the best form of organization for the locality, etc. Either the National office or this committee should be able to give help here. The statement of the purposes of the organization and of the standards for a local chapter would be useful here, but I believe correspondence or visits in which local questions would be discussed would also be needed.

## *Books*

**LATER CRIMINAL CAREERS.** By Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, New York. The Commonwealth Fund, 1937. Pp. xi+403. \$3.00.

In this volume the authors of 500 Criminal Cases, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1930, present the results of their continued study of the group of ex-prisoners of the Massachusetts Reformatory through a second five year period. A comparison of the group's behavior during the first and second five year period reveals that there was an appreciable increase in the proportion of rehabilitated ex-prisoners during the second five year period (32.1 per cent : 21.5 per cent), and it is the purpose of this study to determine the reasons for the trend away from criminality.

The conclusion is reached that the factor of maturation through aging causes improvement in family relationships, assumption of economic responsibilities, industrial status, or use of leisure time which accompanies reformation in criminal behavior. The statistical presentation of the data required to arrive at this conclusion together with case illustrations and the authors' observations on crime preventive efforts should be of interest to all social workers.

J. H. L.



## Letters of Reference

(Continued from Page 5)

2. A device for the evaluation of a social agency should be created. Workers are demanding references for agencies. Some of the difficulties inherent in this problem have been mentioned in a recent publication of the AASW. "Another general area in which standards remain ill-defined and unobjectified is in relation to criteria by which an agency's standing may be judged. Here again it is recognized that no definite scheme of measurement or evaluation can or should be evolved. However, the present obscurity leaves to gossip and rumor a prominent role in determining an agency's professional standing and makes inquiry into its conditions and practices an individual challenge or impudence."\*
3. The committee feels that relatively lesser weighting than has heretofore been the practice, should be assigned to references in any series of devices for evaluating workers. The worker's training, the types and sequence of positions held, his evaluation of himself, and the personal interview are all of greater significance than the reference.
4. The committee sees a great need for the profession to create constructive methods for testing the validity of the conclusions we draw about workers.

In conclusion, such random reflections of this committee as are herewith set forth, led us to a general agreement that a reference is a device of quite limited utility. As a further consideration to the difficulties and anomalies already mentioned, there is a growing conviction that social work, and more specifically case work, makes a unique demand upon the practitioner for the development of a professional personality.† The capacity for such development can seldom be predicted. It must be tested out in the actual job experience. This would appear to be a liability which must be accepted, for the present, by the employing agency as an unavoidable charge upon its overhead, until more reliable instruments can be devised for measuring the imponderables in the relationship of social work and social worker to each other.

\* "Some Points on Professional Standards" by Martha Maltman and Grace Marcus—published by AASW.

† See Virginia P. Robinson's book—"Supervision in Social Case Work."

## Interpretation

(Continued from Page 13)

The findings of the Institute of Public Opinion practically coincided with the results of the Board's own day-to-day analysis of press and public opinion. The Board's own review of some 16,000 newspaper and magazine articles, dealing with the Social Security program, over the past 15 months shows approximately 90 per cent of them favorable and 10 per cent adversely critical. This same analysis shows in the neighborhood of 2 per cent of the articles as factually erroneous.

What happened in the Social Security Board with respect to Informational Service is, I believe, typical of what is going to happen more and more in public departments—Federal, State and local. I have in mind here not so much the job that was done after an Informational Service was established, but rather the fact that the three members appointed by the President to serve as the Board, promptly recognized—without having the idea "sold to them" by anyone—that efficient administration of this unprecedented social work program would require an unprecedented Informational Service.

The members of this Board were courageous enough to visualize the need of an informational staff on a par with the staffs of the bureaus charged with the administration of its primary functions—public assistance, unemployment insurance and old-age insurance. The Board and its partner in the selection of personnel, the Civil Service Commission, looked for the staff of this Informational Service in social agencies and schools of social work as well as in newspaper offices and schools of journalism, but it picked from all four of these groups of institutions not social workers but informational service specialists. It turned out that a number of the latter happened to be members of the American Association of Social Workers, but they were chosen as people who by educational background, experience, temperament and personality were equipped to carry on in the techniques of public information and education.

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### Members of the Committee on Letters of Reference

MARY PALEVSKY, <i>Chairman</i>	
CONSTANCE BALL	ANNA E. KING
ROSE M. BARRETT	CALMAN RAWLEY
ELIZABETH W. CLARK	MABEL UZZELL
ERMA COFFMAN	OLIVE WALSER

